REMARKS

The following remarks are made in response to the Office Action dated October 24, 2006, in which the Examiner has objected to the language of claim 1, for formality reasons. Applicant respectfully submits that newly added claims 5 and 6 will obviate the Examiner's objections.

Claims 1 through 4 stood rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102, as reading on prior art Patent No. 5,600,930 to Drucker. The Examiner takes the position that Drucker illustrates a panel assembly having a core panel, a decorative panel, and dividers between these panels. The Examiner points to the core structure of the Drucker panel as defining "dividers."

With respect to claim 2, the Examiner points to Figure 5 of Drucker, and more particularly to the tubular member 36, as a "bridging member" of the type claimed in this application.

The structure disclosed in the present case does have rectangular panels, but the Applicant's panels are provided in an open gird of the type used in a false ceiling. While Applicant's panel assemblies which do bear a certain similarity to the panel of the prior art Drucker Patent No. 5,600,930, such similarity is only superficial, given the fact that the panels of Drucker are used as partitions, and only relate to "ceilings" in so far as such a ceiling might be a structural component of a building.

The invention resides in a false ceiling of the type constructed within a building structure such as that of Drucker to afford a space for heating and ventilating ducts, and mounting of lighting fixtures, and to provide a space within which wiring and cabling can be fed to and from different parts of the building structure.

Such false ceiling structures have generally consisted merely of an open grid framework suspended from the building structure ceiling itself (such as from ceiling panels of the type depicted in the Drucker patent). Conventional ceiling grid structures are designed for supporting only very light weight decorative ceiling panels. The present invention starts from such a conventional false ceiling grid structure, and calls for that structure plus a plurality of ceiling panel assemblies provided in that grid structure. Applicant's ceiling panels bear only a superficial similarity to the panels disclosed in Drucker.

For example, in Drucker, the structural panels have a substantial length and width relative to their thickness and are so designed as to be structurally interconnected with one another to form a partition wall or structural ceiling in a building structure.

The ceiling panels in a false ceiling grid structure are provided solely to isolate the space above the ceiling from that below the structural ceiling, and rather than providing a structural partition wall, such false ceilings are designed only to support the weight of lighting fixtures and air diffusers of the type used to service the space below the false ceiling. Consequently, the invention herein resides at least in part in recognizing a new use for such a false ceiling structure wherein the various ceiling panels can be made with a hollow interior, provided with spacers for vertically spacing decorative and core panels. Some such spacers further include bridging members extending across and between selected spacers to support wiring, at least temporarily, during installation of building wiring. Although these members are concealed, by reason of the decorative panels secured below the spacers when the false ceiling structure is finished, they nevertheless are functionally necessary to realize the advantage during this wiring installation.

Drucker does not show or suggest the basic idea of false ceiling panels designed, as are those of the present invention, with a hollow interior for running wires and cables through that ceiling structure. The fact that the panel interconnecting system of Drucker happens to show hollow tubular support members (such as illustrated at 35 and 36) merely means that the panels of Drucker must be connected to one another for support. The Drucker structure is more akin to the ceiling grid structure of the present invention than to the claimed hollow panel assemblies with spacers and bridging members. The present invention combines a false ceiling grid structure with hollow panel assemblies, as claimed in newly added claims 5 and 6.

Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection on Drucker 5,600,930 for the reasons presented above, and requests favorable consideration of newly added claims 5 and 6 in light of these remarks.

Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended herein is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any questions on the scope and/or language of the claims as presented herein, Applicants can be contacted collect at the telephone number listed below for any clarification that might be required to more clearly define the invention disclosed over the prior art generally and the cited reference in particular.

This application is submitted during the first month beyond the due date for a Response in the outstanding Office Action, and a fee in the amount of $120.00 is enclosed together with this request for an extension of time within thirty (30) days in which to file this Response. Applicant believes no additional fees are due with the filing of this Response; however, if it is determined that additional fees are required, please charge our Deposit Account No. 13-0235.

Respectfully submitted,

By
John C. Hilton
Registration No. 22,965
Attorney for Applicant(s)

McCORMICK, PAULDING & HUBER LLP
CityPlace II, 185 Asylum Street
Hartford, CT 06103-4102
Tel: (860) 549-5290
Fax: (860) 527-0464